



▶ **EUROCITIES**  
**DECLARATION ON WORK**  
CITIES AT WORK FOR MORE AND BETTER JOBS,  
AND A FAIRER, MORE INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

# ► OUR CALL TO ACTION

► Our major cities are Europe's drivers of sustainable and inclusive economic development, and the places where our joint actions can demonstrate results for our citizens.

We propose an EU high level round table on cities and work in 2015. We will be there as city mayors and leaders and call on those with the political responsibility in the European institutions, our national governments and key partners to engage with us.

This roundtable must identify actions to address immediate challenges, making sure that we are deploying efforts in a way that best ensures results on the ground. It should confront Europe's work challenge in all its dimensions. It should identify what is not working, facilitate more effective multi-level partnership, address how to better enable and empower our cities, and unlock our shared potential. The forum must also consider the longer term outlook and how we position our cities to manage and exploit the future trends and transformations we face.

The round table should result in a roadmap of shared actions, and in a real partnership process with a clear follow-up.

This is critical if we are to improve the quality of lives of those living in Europe today, for whom results need to come quickly. We need to ensure that jointly, in our cities and communities, we can take full advantage of the new trends that will define or future. Well-performing cities and metropolitan areas are crucial not just for the local, regional and national level, but for Europe as a whole.

If we fail to deliver now on this challenge, Europe will be dealing with the consequences for generations to come. ◀

## ▶ THE CURRENT CONTEXT

▶ The employment situation in Europe remains critical. In the EU as a whole, over 24 million people were unemployed at the end of 2014. Over five million were young people under the age of 25 and 12 million had been looking for a job for one year or more.<sup>1</sup>

The challenges are well documented: low levels of growth and job creation, and a mismatch of skills with labour market needs; high youth unemployment and a growing number of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET); rising numbers of long-term unemployed and early school leavers, and persisting barriers to labour market access for many groups. Even where employment is increasing, many people find themselves without adequate resources to live. Inequalities and poverty, including in-work poverty, are on the rise.

Three quarters of those living in Europe live in urban areas. As mayors and leaders of Europe's major cities, we see the urgency of the situation on a daily basis. The crisis has led to a significant increase in demand on employment and social services, at a time of reduced public budgets.

Results are not coming quickly enough. Europe is facing the real risk of structural unemployment and a lost generation. As inequalities and poverty increase, the risks to social cohesion also grow.

<sup>1</sup> Figures from: An employment oriented investment strategy for Europe, International Labour Organisation, 2015; and <http://bit.ly/1Ar6aog>

## ▶ WORK WITH US

Although challenges are shared, they are being felt differently across Europe, with growing regional disparities in terms of GDP, employment and unemployment.<sup>2</sup> In some cities, it is those already at risk of poverty who have seen their situations deteriorate. In others, there has been a rapid spread of poverty to new groups and sections of society who find themselves affected for the first time.<sup>3</sup>

Promoting economic, social and territorial cohesion in Europe requires a balance between economic and social objectives, and a territorial approach. Actions to create quality jobs, active labour markets and tackle unemployment must make sense in the local context, otherwise they will not be effective. We believe Europe's major cities and metropolitan areas provide critical mass and the right level for action.

There is an urgent need for a focus and stimulus at European level on this urban dimension to Europe's employment challenge. ◀

▶ To tackle effectively the challenge of work in Europe, and achieve long term sustainable solutions, we need a holistic approach. This approach should recognise the role cities have to play in developing the inclusive labour market landscape we need.

The right mix of supply and demand-side interventions, which will come from combining job creation measures with active labour market policies, will be specific to the needs of different city labour markets. This requires collaboration between cities, employers, educational and training bodies, NGOs, financial institutions, trade unions and experts.

Solutions must be driven by the needs of our local labour markets, under the leadership of our major cities, in partnership with their wider metropolitan areas. This is the level where decisions should be taken and policies implemented for the local labour market.

Creating the right conditions and quality of life for people, investment, innovation and businesses to thrive is heavily dependent on local factors. Our cities are hubs of economic activity and key players in stimulating local labour markets, brokering partnerships locally to connect employers, universities and training institutions; supporting business creation and entrepreneurship; creating apprenticeship programmes.

As major employers and procurers of goods and services, our cities themselves are significant players in our local economies. There is an urgent need to address the barriers to greater flexibility in procurement for innovation and quality jobs, to truly unlock its economic potential. Cities must be partners in defining priorities for the European Structural and Investment Funds, and we must ensure that funds are targeted to the needs in our urban areas. Technical assistance will also be decisive for many cities, in supporting their access to new financial instruments.

<sup>2</sup> 5<sup>th</sup> Committee of the Regions Monitoring Report on Europe 2020, October 2014

<sup>3</sup> The Europe 2020 mid-term review: Cities' views on the employment, poverty reduction and education goals, EUROCITIES, October 2014

For some cities, the ability to make urgently needed investments in long-term public infrastructure projects is limited by fiscal consolidation measures at EU and national level. This is a particular challenge for those cities experiencing rapid population growth. Consideration must be given at EU and member state level as to how cities can be enabled to make essential and growth enhancing public investment.<sup>4</sup>

Assisting those most in need and furthest from the labour market to enter, or return, to the labour market also requires a local approach. Tailored solutions and integrated services are needed to tackle labour market barriers, support activation and invest in people for the future. The integrated approach at city level, which is crucial to successful activation policies, must be better recognised and enabled by other levels of government.

More effective partnership is needed between the different levels of government. EU and national initiatives must complement and strengthen city actions, targeting the real needs of our citizens. Member state good practice in effective coordination and involving cities should be acknowledged and given visibility.

Effective responses to tackle youth unemployment are particularly urgent if we are to avoid losing a generation. Everyone shares the political priority but results are not coming quickly enough for our young people. We need accelerated action on youth unemployment. Education and access to education and training must be at the core of our policies. Working more closely with our cities, the EU and member states can help deliver results for our young people through an improved Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) and Youth Guarantee, better connecting to the needs of our local economies. Many member states have so far not made use of the resources the Commission has made available to combat youth unemployment.

The Commission should examine the possibility of making part of these funds directly available to the major cities. YEI funds should also be available to address unemployment in deprived neighbourhoods of our cities, where rates may be well above the regional average.

The growing numbers of those affected by long-term unemployment is also a serious challenge in our cities and similarly requires joined-up efforts. Our major cities should be directly involved in the current reflections at European level on what the responses should be.

Improving gender equality must remain central to our efforts on employment. Quality and affordable childcare provision and flexible working arrangements are crucial examples of how to improve access to labour markets for parents.

A stronger take up of social clauses in procurement can be a powerful tool for building inclusive labour markets, but there is still a lack of awareness and understanding of what is possible.

Our cities today find themselves at the centre of a transformation, propelled by new technologies and defined by a shift towards a greener, circular, sharing and social economy. These changes bring opportunities and responsibilities. We are in a prime position to understand the trends and help ensure the wider benefits for the public good. Building greater resilience in our cities and neighbourhoods, to manage this economic and social change, is a critical challenge for the future of our cities, and the future of Europe as a whole. Involving us in developing the frameworks needed to steer this transformation simply makes good sense. ◀

<sup>4</sup> In 2013, 55% of total public investment in the EU-28 was carried out by sub-national governments. However between 2009 and 2013 sub-national public investment fell from 2.5% of GDP to 1.8%. European Commission; 6<sup>th</sup> Cohesion Report, pp.144-148.

The background features a grid of squares in various shades of gray. A diagonal line runs from the bottom-left corner to the top-right corner, separating the grid into two triangular sections. The squares are arranged in a pattern that suggests a larger square divided into smaller squares.

EUROCITIES is the political platform for major European cities towards the EU institutions. We network the local governments of over 130 of Europe's largest cities and 40 partner cities that between them govern some 130 million citizens across 35 countries.

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